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SUBJECT: FRENCH OVERVIEW OF GAERC TALKS ON GAZA, GUANTANAMO

REF: STATE 4297

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary. On January 23, MFA Chief of EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Patrick Maisonnave provided an overview of the two primary topics for discussion at the January 26-27 GAERC. Foremost, the Foreign Ministers will discuss a way ahead on the Gaza crisis, starting with a non-paper jointly developed by France, the UK, Germany, Italy, and Spain (note: sent by email to EUR/WE and NEA/IPA). The Ministers will also discuss resettlement of Guantanamo detainees, which the French hope could result in a common channel for any formal U.S. requests to be transmitted to a single EU point of contact. End summary.

¶2. (C) On Gaza, Maisonnave said the most difficult GAERC discussion will be on the political possibilities, specifically whether to promote a government of national consensus, as stated by President Abbas in Kuwait. The EU enjoys broad agreement on the need to increase the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza in order to restore a minimum of normalcy for its population. Maisonnave noted that Israeli FM Livni listened at her recent dinner meeting with the EU FMs, but the GOF does not expect Israel to make any significant logistical improvements before its February 10 elections. Monday's GAERC discussion will nonetheless reinforce this need. The EU also agrees broadly on the need to reopen border crossings, which will also help with arms interdiction. Maisonnave noted that one goal of the January 25 dinner between the EU Foreign Ministers and their counterparts from Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority is to drive home to the Egyptians the need for their cooperation. Regarding the prospect of a political way forward, Maisonnave said most member-states, including France, prioritize the establishment of a national reconciliation government, but that some states believe the EU cannot support any national unity government that includes Hamas since Hamas has not accepted Quartet principles. Thus, producing consensus on this subject may be the most difficult. France, the UK, Germany, Italy, and Spain collaborated in the development of a non-paper that suggests an initial way forward on six areas of concern (humanitarian aid, arms interdiction, reopening of border crossings, reconstruction, inter-Palestinian reconciliation, and the peace process). This non-paper was presented at the PSC today, January 23, in Brussels, where it also received the blessing of the Czech EU Presidency. Maisonnave said he was unable to share the non-paper, which post subsequently received through other MFA contacts, but stressed that if the paper meets consensus on Monday, it will be discussed with the U.S. very soon thereafter.

¶3. (C) On Guantanamo, Maisonnave said the EU welcomes President Obama's decision, which the EU had publicly called for and which will alleviate human rights concerns that, for some, may previously have tainted U.S. efforts against terror. Noting that resettlement will be discussed for the first time at this GAERC, Maisonnave expressed GOF hopes that

the EU 27 might agree on a common channel for receipt of formal requests from the U.S. to take in former detainees. As some states have already ruled out accepting any detainees, this agreement would not place any further obligations on individual member-states, which could still make decisions following their national preferences.

Maisonnave noted that the visa-free Schengen zone within the EU requires some consensus among at least those European countries. Maisonnave echoed FM Kouchner's recent statements about France being willing to consider resettlement of detainees on a case-by-case basis, while cautioning us that with European Parliament elections coming up in June, some member-state governments may show excessive prudence on accepting detainees to avoid flaring up political sensitivities.

PEKALA